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Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker and children, 1854 Apr. 06

John W. H. Baker

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Letter 21

Mokelumne Hill, April 6th 1854

My Dear Wife & Children

I received your very welcome letters last evening and was made again to rejoice at hearing of your good health and comfortable situation. I am enjoying very good health and the pleasant weather we now have here very much. The air is balmy and invigorating and the hills and dales clothed in the most beautiful and variegated verdure. Flowers are in abundance, but I am in a strange field whenever I endeavor to give name or know the nature of them. Moreover my business keeps me in prison as I might say for I have no time that I dare devote to the gathering of flowers untill Dr. H. shall have returned. And even then I suppose the principal part of the business will fall upon me as I think it has done since I have been here. Business is being somewhat better for the last week or two and I am feeling quite anxious that Dr. H. should return. I suppose that ere this he has made his visits and is now well on his way back. I wish to know what kind of information you obtained from him or what your principal questions were, as likewise what kind of a tale he told of California, of his doings here, etc. I like Dr. H. very well thus far, but still there is some of that Holbrook disposition in him yet. (Self-esteem connected with impatience of correction even when in the wrong). But I can get along with such a man as well or better than most people. He lived in misery while associated with Dr. Teall his former partner, and since he has been with me has seemed like a prisoner let loose. sometimes feeling quite homesick or having a "slight touch of the blues". I hope he will feel quite contented when he arrives with his family. Well! I begin to feel lonely myself since there is a prospect of Brother Oliver leaving for N. Hampshire on the next Steamer, the 16th of the month. he has disposed of his mule train

Letter 21

-2-

and is now settling up his affairs as fast as possible. He and John Storrs went from here to Jesus Maria this morning. they had been stopping at the Hill for a day or two, and will probably return here in a day or two more. I do not feel very much like writing to-night and therefore I postpone untill I can raise a little more steam.

Saturday, Apr. 8th.

I have this morning been reading the N. H. Sentinel of the date Feby. 10th and find in it some familiar names. it is like an old acquaintance very welcome, and has received my special attention. The business matters of the place seem to be going on as formerly. Among the advertisements I saw Edwin's advertising the "Old Place", the "Cheney Farm", "Chase Farm" & "Russell Place", likewise the farm of Francis Henry for Sale. the Death of Laurant S. Titus, was she a relative of Adele? and many other things such as Donation Parties &c.

I perceive that my old friend Lucius D. Pierce Esq. is located in Winchester, Mass. in Partnership with a man by the name of Tyler. Does Dennison still continue in his location at Winchester? and what are his wages? John Storrs is in town to-day, says Oliver has concluded to leave for home on Tuesday or Wednesday next. He will probably be in town the first of the week and I will conclude upon something to send you. in the mean time I am inclined to think that the Stevens family will persuade him to remain at home rather than return to California. their endeavor will be for him to take the Farm and maintain those dependent on the property for a living. It would be rather a hard trade to Oliver probably, as he can make more money in California in six months than he could on that farm in two years (although the farm is a very good one) I am suspicious that he thinks he may return in the fall and bring his family with him. As to the propriety of such a measure I would consider that the condition of Society is improving very rapidly in

the principle towns or villages in the country. Female society is receiving additions of the right kind, and the baser sort are being obliged to seek refuge in other places, and by the coming of another winter we shall have a very respectable number of respectable ladies in town. There have been several arrivals of families in town recently and the addition which will be made at the landing of Dr. H. and his "tribe" will complete quite a social circle. I received Dr. Eaton's letter a few days since and am quite thankful for the same. if you see him tell him I will write him or answer "poco tiempo" as the Spanish say. (Sarah will translate as the words are very similar to the Latin) You seem to think in your letter that you may come short in money, and I infer from the sad condition of Fred when he was so near starved for the want of some meat-victuals that you are living short. Fred enjoys the appetite of his father I think and thinks he must have some kind of meat every day. I have sent some money and hope ere this that you have received it and that he is now saved the necessity of starving. If the funds are like to run out and he cannot find enough to eat you can send him to me in California and here he can have all kinds of meats from that of squirrels and rabbits to that of deer or Grizzly Bear, three times each day if necessary. I think he might obtain a small piece of dog-pie if his appetite craved such a delicacy. I know not why the meals are not more regular upon you side of the Water. The only way I can account for the reception of letters by Mrs. Wingate so soon as the 28th of Feby is the thought that her letters might have been sent on the Nicargua line, and that the mail Steamer was detained and did not arrive in N. Y. untill the 6th of March, when it should have been in as soon as the 1st of March. I conclude that about March 8th you saw the announcement of the arrival of Dr. H. and likewise received my letter by mail giving my items up to the last of Jany.

Letter 21

-4-

Sunday Eve

From some information which I obtained by way of Mr. Thompson (brother-in-law of the Dudleys) I shall not be surprised if you do not see Dr. H. as he may be under the necessity of avoiding some of his troublesome creditors in N. H. this I write privately as a matter of privacy it was told to me. I did not know that he was in debt there untill this day--If you have seen him it is all just as well but do not say from me that you are knowing to his indebtedness I am fearfull he will not have a very pleasant visit at N. H. being constantly in fear of detention from legal officers. I know I should feel wretched to be about among my friends knowing that I was indebted to them and still endeavoring to avoid payment. If I had been in the Place I would have sent for my family rather than to have gone where I thought I might be arrested. But he is in my opinion a very great calculator after all. I have written Silas a letter which I shall send out this mail. I have been puzzling my head somewhat to find something to send home to you and the children and after a long time have come to the conclusion to send you nothing but some money and with that you can buy such presents for the children as you think best, and can take \$5 for each of the children and put it in the Bank at Windsor if you choose to do so-- I will send you \$100 by Oliver, which he will give you when he arrives.

Saturday, April 11th, 1854.

Oliver started this morning and will leave San Francisco on

Saturday, and as you will be likely to see him soon after his arrival

I will make short work of the remainder of this letter and let you have the ballance out in talk with him. I have sent \$100 by him which you can use for your benefit making it last untill I can send more--Give my respects to all who enquire and for yourself accept the love of your

Husband

Mrs. Julie Ann Baker Meriden
N.H.

John W. H. Baker